

Amherst's downtown and village centers should be a focus for the community's economic life, cultural vigor, and social activity. Vitality in these areas can be pursued through a variety of initiatives, including encouraging additional housing development, economic investment, expansion of cultural facilities, promotion of a mix of uses, and improvements to the public realm (parks, streetscapes, and public squares). These initiatives will lead to a more walkable community, allow for more day-to-day interactions among residents, and attract more visitors to the community while enhancing Amherst's growing tourism industry.

infill/redevelopment projects. Incentives such as density bonuses and more flexible dimensional regulations should be available for infill and redevelopment projects that demonstrate specific characteristics of high quality, sustainable design.

development in appropriate areas. Perhaps the most significant theme that surfaced throughout the Planning Amherst Together process is the need to protect the Town's significant open spaces, including wildlife habitats, farmland, recreational lands, scenic vistas, and environmentally sensitive areas. Conservation of large tracts of land will require trade-offs in other areas. For example, in order to deal with rising land prices that can result from reducing the supply of buildable land, higher density development must be allowed and incentives must be developed to direct more growth and increased economic activity to the appropriate areas. A mix of uses should likewise be promoted to encourage a more walkable community and bring residents closer to jobs, shops, and services. This Master Plan tries to address these trade-offs, striking a balance between land preservation and the need for intensified responsible development in Amherst.

resource areas. The Town should engage in a comprehensive review and update of its zoning bylaw and map to ensure that the regulations reflect the community’s vision for future development, as captured in the land use principles that preface this chapter. Permitted densities may need to be increased in built-up areas like village centers, and reduced in key resource areas or in agricultural zones.

Need for intensified development: Ultimately, the preservation of land in Amherst must be coupled with the intensification of development in appropriate areas of the community. More land can be conserved if higher density development is directed to the downtown, village centers and specific districts and neighborhoods.

higher densities in a different location, where such density is desired and appropriate. Amherst should explore the implementation of a TDR program in order to manage future growth.

Through infrastructure investment, incentives, and improved regulations, the Town should foster increased economic, cultural and social activity in the downtown and outlying village centers by encouraging a variety of mixed-uses including live-work units. These areas should foster interactions through attractive public spaces and the creation of a walkable environment.

Residential development near or in combination with shops, services, and public transit can greatly contribute to a more vital community, particularly when streetscapes are designed to promote walking and biking. Such development can reduce energy consumption, help build a sense of community, and improve community health overall. Residents are more likely to interact on the street and enjoy public spaces when they can walk or bicycle to many of their daily destinations.

The Town should review and update its development ordinances to encourage additional upper floor residential development in the downtown and village centers.

Live-work units may take variable forms including renovated lofts and mixed-use townhouses. This type of housing encourages adaptive reuse of older buildings, leads to lower car emissions for workers who no longer need to

The zoning for the downtown and village centers should be revised to allow for more downtown housing and higher residential densities. By increasing relative densities and allowing small businesses and residences to coexist, the Town can create more walkable neighborhoods that provide residents easy access to jobs, goods, services, and public transit. Intensified residential development above ground-floor shops and restaurants can help to create a more vibrant downtown community. An integrated mix of uses paired with a pedestrian-friendly environment can also generate positive impacts in terms of reducing traffic, commute times, and energy consumption. The community should:

☒ Rezone Limited Business (B-L) areas near downtown to General Business (B-G) or another appropriate district to make it easier to create multi-family residential units and residential units in conjunction with businesses.

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Economic Development: To strengthen, diversify and grow the economic base and employment opportunities in the town, through smart development in the downtown, village centers, and commercial zones. Initiatives will be focused on clusters of businesses, mixed services, high technology/clean industries, cultural attractions, education, tourism and agricultural resources. Such development will maintain, improve and sustain quality of life, ecological consciousness and social values.

supporting goods and services and transit. A better integration of land uses can help to reduce the need for car travel. When residences are in close proximity to shopping, services, jobs, parks, public transit facilities, and other public amenities, residents spend less time driving and consume fewer energy resources. Energy consumption is further reduced when streets are designed to be more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.

appropriate for density increases and redevelopment. Certain portions of the downtown, village centers, and specific districts and neighborhoods may be appropriate for higher densities of development. The Town should update its regulatory code to ensure that such development is permitted and encouraged, particularly as infill and redevelopment initiatives are pursued.

Appropriately-designed infill development can promote neighborhood revitalization, produce higher densities that lead to a more efficient use of land and infrastructure, and bring residents closer to necessary goods and services. The following strategies suggest ways to promote additional infill development in Amherst.

The Town should also develop incentives to encourage energy-efficient development. For example, density bonuses could be offered to development projects that are LEED-certified and/or which meet other appropriate standards.